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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the two 2001 issues of the newsletter of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE). Each issue contains a feature article and one or more short articles on topics related to early childhood education, calls for papers, announcements about Internet resources, news items about and list of publications from ERIC/EECE, and articles from the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care. The feature articles are: "Multiage Grouping and Academic Achievement in Elementary School" by Susan J. Kinsey (Spring) and "Does Teacher Training Make a Difference in Child Outcomes?" by Lilian G. Katz (Fall). (HTH)

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ERIC/EECE Newsletter, 2001

Volume 13, Numbers 1-2, 2001

Laurel Preece, Editor

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Spring 2001 Volume 13, Number 1

eric/eece NEWSLETTER

Multiage Grouping and Academic Achievement in Elementary School

Susan J. Kinsey

Multiage classes during the elementary school years have been an option of educational practice in the United States since the introduction of graded education in the 19th century. Since 1949, several research studies have investigated the relationship between multiage grouping and academic achievement. Reviews of research (e.g., Anderson & Pavan, 1993) reveal inconsistent results. Veenman (1995) suggests that inconsistencies in research outcomes may be attributed to an inconsistent definition of multiage education. According to Lloyd (1999), the variety of ways multiage grouping is conceptualized and implemented limits the ability of researchers to make generalizations about the academic impact of the multiage model.

Defining Multiage Is Key to Interpreting Research Outcomes

While a variety of models are represented in the research, contemporary implementation of multiage grouping is defined by Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman (1990, p. 1) as "placing children who are at least a year apart in age into the same classroom groups" so as to intentionally "optimize what can be learned when children of different—as well as same—ages and abilities have frequent opportunities to interact." The framework encourages the use of child-directed and experiential learning.

A consistent factor in those studies that show positive achievement outcomes for multiage students over same-age students is the use of a developmentally appropriate approach to teaching, including teaming, cooperative group work, integrated curriculum, and encouragement of interactions among students. In addition, a substantial body of research supports the use of cooperative as compared with competitive or individualistic educational efforts. In a synthesis of the results of over 375 studies, Johnson and Johnson (1994) cite evidence that interactive involvement among classmates may be one of the most cost-effective "support systems" for increasing academic achievement (p. 56). According to Slavin (1987), "Under the right motivational conditions, peers can and, more important, will provide explanations in one another's proximal zones of development [as described by Vygotsky], and will engage in the kind of cognitive conflict needed for disequilibration and cognitive growth [as described by Piaget]" (p. 1166). However, Slavin's work demonstrates that peer interaction in and of itself does not enhance learning. Rather, learning enhancement depends on the specific ways that the teacher guides those interactions.

> Students from multiage classrooms achieved greater academic outcomes in relation to their abilities than students ... from single-age classrooms....

Cross-age Interaction as the Unique Variable

Using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, a study by Kinsey (2000) supports Slavin's (1987) work by suggesting a relationship between facilitated cross-age interactions and achievement outcomes. Building on results from a study reporting increased frequencies of prosocial behaviors of students in multiage classrooms

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- Market Rate Surveys
- Head Start Conference
- Child Care Regulations "Long Way" from Matching Quality Care

ISSN 0889-5252

(McClellan & Kinsey, 1999), Kinsey demonstrated that higher teacher ratings of student prosocial behaviors were significantly related to greater student achievement outcomes on both standardized and report card assessments. Statistical analysis demonstrated that when all classrooms employed developmentally appropriate teaching practices, students from multiage classrooms achieved greater academic outcomes in relation to their abilities and demonstrated greater increases in academic achievement than students of the same and higher abilities from single-age classrooms.

It is critical to note that the academic benefits demonstrated for students in multiage classrooms by Kinsey may be the result of the classroom teacher's active facilitation and encouragement of cross-age learning opportunities. The unique contribution of multiage grouping may be its capacity to address the needs of individual students by (1) creating an occasion for scaffolding of growth opportunities provided by both the teacher and a multiage peer group and (2) providing an environment in which close relationships between teacher and student and among classmates allow for the development of mutual trust and understanding. Results from Kinsey indicate that both the combination of these relationships and the environment in which they are formed make a significant contribution to the academic growth of students in multiage classrooms, *beyond* the use of developmentally appropriate practices.

To the Future

Effective research in the area of multiage education is still in its infancy. In the current climate of accountability, widespread acceptance of the multiage model in elementary schools is unlikely until it is clear that multiage education leads to greater academic achievement. If careful attention is given to definition and selection of multiage classrooms, and detailed descriptions of classroom procedures are provided, research outcomes may reliably indicate which specific aspects of multiage classroom practices are most beneficial. However, because of the present ambiguity in definitions of multiage education, educators who are currently using the multiage model, and those who are contemplating its implementation, need to assess the impact of their specific multiage classrooms on academic achievement for students participating in these classrooms. At the same time, researchers need to continue to explore through qualitative measures—observational study and directed interviews with both teachers and children—how the multiage classroom can contribute to academic achievement.

For More Information

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This article was adapted from "Multiage Grouping and Academic Achievement," an ERIC/EECE Digest. ERIC/EECE Digests can be accessed at http://ericeece.org/pubs/digests.html. Print copies are available by contacting the clearinghouse. See the Publications insert for ordering information.

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☐ *Resources on Brain Development.*
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☐ *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.*

• Major Publications

- ☐ *NEW! The Project Approach Catalog 3*, by the Project Approach Study Group (2000). Judy Helm, ed. Cat. #224, $10.
- ☐ *Resilience Guide: A Collection of Resources on Resilience in Children and Families* (1999). B. Cesarone, ed. Cat. #223, $15.
- ☐ *Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference* (1998). Anne S. Robertson, ed. Cat. #222, $15.
- ☐ *Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, by Sallee Beneke (1998). Cat. #220, $10.
- ☐ *A to Z: The Early Childhood Educator's Guide to the Internet* (Rev. 1998). Cat. #214, Loose-leaf pages only, $10. ☐ $15 with binder.
- ☐ *Child Development Knowledge and Teachers of Young Children*, by Lilian G. Katz (1997). Cat. #217, $10.
- ☐ *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia Approach*, a collection of seven papers (1994). Cat. #215, $15
- ☐ *Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #212, $10.
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From the National Child Care Information Center
(Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care)

Market Rate Surveys: A Critical Tool for Helping Low-Income Parents Access Child Care

Janet Mascia, Executive Director, NCCIC

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is one of the primary federal funding sources for helping low-income families pay for child care. These funds are provided to states, which in turn use them to provide child care subsidies to eligible families. An important tool for helping states establish their subsidy rates is a market rate survey.

A market rate survey measures the price charged by child care providers in a specific geographic area. These surveys can provide valuable information to a state about the price of care in communities across the state and enable it to establish subsidy rates at sufficient levels to allow low-income parents equal access to a range of child care options. However, market rate surveys are difficult to do well so that accurate information is collected from a representative spectrum of child care providers. Some of the difficulty stems from the market rate concept; other difficulties reside in the actual design and implementation of the survey instrument itself.

The market rate concept is based on the assumption that the best way to ensure that low-income families have access to a wide range of child care options is to ensure that the state reimbursement rates are high enough to pay the rates charged by at least 75% of child care providers in a particular geographic area. The problem with this assumption, however, is that child care prices are typically based on what parents can afford or are willing to pay—not the actual cost of providing the service. Hence, when a state's reimbursement rate is based on a price that does not fully cover providers' costs, providers cut back on such things as wages or facility improvements, which often affect the quality of the care provided, or refuse to serve subsidized children.

Accurate information is critical in establishing sufficient subsidy rates. However, designing and conducting a useful survey pose a number of challenges to states. For example, to make certain that the data collected are fully reflective of the child care market in a particular area, a state needs to obtain accurate rate information from all providers in that market. Identifying providers and obtaining a sufficient number of responses to the survey so that the information is representative of the price of care for that area takes time, planning, and effort. Further, providers also need to know how to establish rates that do cover their costs, and reflect this information on the survey instrument.

Using comprehensive and well-designed market rate surveys is only one way to ensure that low-income families have a range of child care options from which to choose. Developing other financing strategies that build on and supplement a market rate approach is a step equally challenging and important for states to take in meeting the child care needs of its low-income families.

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This article is adapted from a report written by Louise Stoney for the Children's Defense Fund titled *Promoting Access to Quality Child Care: Critical Steps in Conducting Market Rate Surveys and Establishing Rate Policies.* A follow-up to this report and a proceedings summary of a meeting held on this topic by the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, HHS, is being prepared by the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) and will be available later this year. To receive a copy of these publications, please call 1-800-616-2242 or email info@nccic.org. For more information, visit http://nccic.org on the Web.

Call for Presentations: Head Start 6th National Research Conference

Presentations are being solicited for "The First Eight Years, Pathways to the Future," Head Start's 6th National Research Conference, presented by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and Society for Research in Child Development, to be held June 26-29, 2002, in Washington, DC. The *Call for Presentations* is available at http://www.headstartresearchconf.net

Proposals are due on June 15, 2001. Direct all inquiries about submissions to Dr. Faith Lamb-Parker; Columbia University; Mailman School of Public Health/ CPFH; 60 Haven Avenue, B-3; New York, NY 10032; email: flp1@columbia.edu; phone: 212-305-4154; fax: 212-305-2015.

Reviewers are also needed to assist in reviewing submissions for the conference. If you are interested in becoming a reviewer, please contact Bethany Chirico; Ellsworth Associates; 1749 Old Meadow Road, Suite 600; McLean, VA 22102; bchirico@eainet.com; 703-821-3090 ext. 233; fax: 703-821-3989.

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Child Care Regulations "Long Way" from Matching Quality Care

A study of licensing regulations in four states shows that the states set higher standards for child protection than for enhancement of development, according to researchers at the National Center for Early Development & Learning, UNC-Chapel Hill.

These minimum standards departed substantially from professional judgments about what is needed in child care settings, said Dr. James Gallagher, lead author of the study. "Such regulations support the image of child care programs being a "safe haven" rather than a "developmental enhancement." The limited requirements for child care personnel and for community interaction also encourage that image," he said.

The states studied—California, Colorado, Connecticut, and North Carolina—had previously participated in the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes study.

Gallagher said, "This may be because there is a stronger consensus about just what is required for protection of safety and freedom from abuse than about what is needed to enhance development, or it can also mean that, as a society, we are not quite determined to use child care programs to enhance child development through regulations."

He said, "While we should be cautious in assuming a causal relationship between minimal state standards and the number of inadequate or mediocre child care settings that we found in these four states (as well as some outstanding programs), it seems likely that hard-pressed directors of child care centers will meet the minimum standards first and then consider what else they should be doing. These analyses point out that we still are a long way from matching child care regulations with what we know as quality," Gallagher said.

Expectations for health and safety practices were more frequently described in detail, while other high-quality practices—particularly those related to child development—were referred to vaguely, or not at all. Regulators should be precise, he suggested. One important role for professional groups and associations would be to review periodically the rules and standards for child care to assure that they match current thinking in the field. Higher levels of professional preparation should be made explicit.

More details on the study may be found at *http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/spot19.pdf*

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eric/eece

Does Teacher Training Make a Difference in Child Outcomes?

Lilian G. Katz

Currently there are no carefully controlled studies comparing children's achievement and performance outcomes under equal, comparable conditions (e.g., curriculum, teaching practices, socioeconomic status, etc.), except for studies comparing teachers' educational attainment. Several large studies of the relationship between the quality of children's experiences in preschool and child care and the levels of their teachers' academic training do offer a basis for addressing the question.

Staff Qualifications and Income Level of the School Population

Research indicates that overall quality of care and children's language skills are better when caregivers are better educated. Most of the caregivers evaluated in these studies, however, did not typically have a bachelor's degree. And, in early care and education, the level of teachers' academic qualifications tends to be linked to the income level of the families they serve.

Research also shows that teachers' specific training in child development is related to the quality of care they provide. A 1998 study by A. S. Honig found that early childhood education and child development coursework accounted for more than 62% of the variance in teacher behavior in urban child care centers. Although the study reported no formal child outcomes, a reasonable inference from its findings is that the children whose teachers are trained in early childhood education have better results than their peers whose teachers are not as well trained.

Children whose teachers are trained in early childhood education have better results than their peers whose teachers are not as well trained.

Staff Turnover Rates

According to a 1997 report by the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce, the single most important determinant of child care quality is the presence of consistent, sensitive, well-trained, and well-compensated caregivers. High job turnover in the field, however, fueled by poor compensation and few opportunities for advancement, continues to cause the quality of services that children and parents receive to be low.

Inevitably the child care and preschool staff turnover rate and its attendant low level of qualifications are related to the very low level of wages earned. Low wages are unlikely to attract persons with degrees or to make degree attainment a condition of employment. Many for-profit and nonprofit preschool programs encourage teachers and caregivers to enhance their professional expertise by participating in conferences and formal training programs to accumulate credits or to achieve associate arts degrees or child development associate credentials. Recent informal reports, however, indicate that once these qualifications are obtained, staff members tend to seek employment outside the field of early care and education.

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ERIC

Inservice Training

Recent reports of the pre-primary practices of the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia suggest that specific inservice teacher education improves the outcomes of preschool programs. The teachers in these pre-primary schools have only high school diplomas, but they participate in extensive weekly and monthly inservice training sessions. In addition, their continuous professional development is supported by frequent visits of pedagogical advisors (*pedagogista*) who assume major responsibility for development of the schools' entire teaching staff.

Similarly, the longstanding tradition of intense and careful inservice training provided to teachers implementing the High/Scope curriculum may help to account for its exceptional record of positive long-term outcomes for the children served by that program.

Implications

Available information makes it impossible to claim that teachers with a bachelor's degree guarantee better outcomes for children in early childhood programs. There is ample support, however, for the notion that higher levels of academic qualifications of early childhood teachers yield significant improvements in program effectiveness for all children, especially those from low-income families. Without substantial increases in wages and salaries, though, the preschool field is unlikely to attract large numbers of teachers with bachelor's degrees.

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This article was adapted from The Progress of Education Reform 1999-2001. Early Care and Education, 2(6) *published by the Education Commission of the States in June-July 2001.*

For More Information

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Check out the NPIN Virtual Library's new resource **Talking about Terrorism, Tragedy, and Resilience: Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Family Support Professionals** at http://npin.org/library/2001/n00578/n00578.html

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- ☐ *Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary Grades*
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- ☐ *Computers and Young Children*

• 1999 and 1998 Digests

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- ☐ *The Benefits of Mixed-Age Grouping*
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- ☐ *Full-Day Kindergarten Programs*
- ☐ *The Project Approach* ☐ Chinese Version ☐ Spanish Version

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• Resource Lists (No cost or shipping charges.)

- ☐ *Native Americans: Books and Resources*
- ☐ *Bullying in Schools: Resources*
- ☐ *The Project Approach*
- ☐ *Scheduling at the Middle Level*
- ☐ *Resources on Brain Development*
- ☐ *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Models*
- ☐ *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*

• Major Publications

☐ *The Project Approach Catalog 3*, by the Project Approach Study Group (2000). Judy Helm, ed. Cat. #224, $10.
☐ *Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, by Sallee Beneke (1998). Cat. #220, $10.
☐ *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia Approach*, a collection of seven papers (1994). Cat. #215, $15.
☐ *Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #212, $10.
☐ *Dispositions: Definitions and Implications for Early Childhood Practices*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #211, $5.

• ERIC/EECE Newsletters & Journal

☐ *ERIC/EECE Newsletter*; Twice yearly, free; check here to receive the current issue.
☐ *Parent News Offline*; Twice yearly, free; check here to receive the current issue.
Early Childhood Research & Practice; Available only on the Internet at http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/.

• ReadySearches

Computer search reprints with 60 to 100 abstracts of ERIC documents and journal articles ($8 each).

☐ *School Readiness.* (Cat. #108).
☐ *Developmentally Appropriate Programs for Young Children.* (Cat. #109).
☐ *Mixed-Age Groups in Early Childhood and Elementary Education.* (Cat. #112).
☐ *Parent-Teacher Conferences, Report Cards, and Portfolios: Kindergarten through Grade 12.* (Cat. #120).
☐ *Parent Education.* (Cat. #123).
☐ *Kindergarten Scheduling/Research.* (Cat. #127).
☐ *The Reggio Emilia Approach.* (Cat. #137).

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The full texts of Digests, Resource Lists, and out-of-print materials are available on the Web at http://ericeece.org/eecepub.html

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From the National Child Care Information Center
(Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care)

New Developments at the National Child Care Information Center

Eric Karolak, Deputy Director

With six years under its belt and a new agreement for continued operation over the next five years, the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) is celebrating past achievements and preparing for new ventures in child care information services and technical assistance.

The Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recently selected Collins Management Consulting, Inc., to continue to operate NCCIC in partnership with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Under terms of the new five-year contract, NCCIC will expand and enhance its information and technical assistance services to state child care agencies, ACF Regional Offices, parents, child care providers, and the general public, including improvements to the NCCIC Web site and a new focus on child care needs of the Hispanic community.

In the coming months, the NCCIC Web site will be the focus of several new efforts to expand and enhance services. Working in conjunction with ERIC/EECE, NCCIC will develop an online searchable database of NCCIC library holdings. NCCIC's child care library totals more than 11,400 volumes, including many hard-to-find, state-specific resources relating to early education initiatives and the child care delivery system. In the future, NCCIC Web site visitors will be able to search library holdings, retrieving full bibliographic information, abstracts, and in many cases the documents themselves in full-text form free of charge.

NCCIC recently celebrated a "cyber" milestone. The NCCIC Web site—http://nccic.org—administered by ERIC/EECE, topped the two-million-hit mark this summer. The importance of the Web as an information dissemination tool for NCCIC has grown rapidly. In a recent month, nearly 26,000 unique visitors received child care and early education information at the site. Among the most requested pages are NCCIC's State Profiles, offering contact information and a statistical summary of early care and education in each state; the resources of the Child Care Partnership Project, which provide practical information on creating and maintaining public-private partnerships to increase and improve child care; and links to publications, organizations, and other resources on subjects ranging from brain development to welfare reform that are available in the Child Care Topics section.

NCCIC's child care library totals more than 11,400 volumes, including many hard-to-find, state-specific resources relating to early education initiatives and the child care delivery system.

As part of a larger outreach effort to the Hispanic community, NCCIC also will feature a Spanish-language option on its Web site. This tool will allow users to read the contents of the Web site—although not all linked publications—in Spanish. NCCIC continues to offer customized question-answering services in Spanish and will be preparing a number of Spanish-language publications, including a state and local level resource guide and a research paper on child care issues and the Hispanic community.

NCCIC will continue its tradition of producing written technical assistance materials on relevant child care topics. Recently, NCCIC prepared two new publications for the Child Care Bureau. The proceedings of the Bureau's national issues meeting on child care market rate surveys and rate setting methods, held in Washington, DC, in November 2000, are presented in *Rate Setting Policies: Ensuring Access and Improving Quality* (March 2001). *Conducting Market Rate Surveys and Establishing Rate Policies* (July 2001) is a follow-up report summarizing the state of the art in child care market surveys and subsidy rate structures. To receive a copy of these publications, please call 1-800-616-2242 or email info@nccic.org. For more information, visit http://nccic.org on the Web.

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Survey of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs

A national survey of 438 colleges and universities finds that early childhood teacher preparation programs will not be able to meet growing federal and state calls for better trained early childhood teachers. Researchers at the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) found that institutions of higher learning are already understaffed and will be strained by growing demand.

"Overall, programs will not have adequate faculty to meet the projected workforce needs during this era of stronger teacher preparation requirements. In fact, our data indicate that a 76% increase in early childhood faculty would be needed if all current early childhood teachers were required to get a bachelor's degree," said Dr. Pam Winton. She is co-director of the study with Dr. Diane Early, both at NCEDL.

Research has consistently shown that young children who have better educated teachers in preschool do better academically when they reach elementary school. "Unfortunately, 75% of the early childhood teachers in North Carolina have no degree past high school," Winton said.

Data from the survey also showed that over 80% of the part-time and full-time faculty in early childhood education departments are non-Hispanic white. "Administrators said their biggest challenge is attracting and retaining ethnically and linguistically diverse faculty," said Winton.

Early said that the survey also found a common roadblock for students. "Half of the programs offer an associate's in applied science, which is usually a terminal degree and is typically not included in agreements with four-year colleges to guarantee a smooth transition for students. This situation creates roadblocks for early childhood personnel graduating from AAS programs who want to pursue four-year degrees," she said.

More details can be found at the NCEDL Web site (www.ncedl.org).